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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE



PROGRAM MANAGEMENT COURSE INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROGRAM

CULTURAL FACTORS IN MANAGING
AN FMS CASE PROGRAM:
SAUDI ARABIAN ARMY ORDNANCE
CORPS (SOCP) PROGRAM

STUDY PROJECT REPORT
PNC 77-2

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Major US Army

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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

STUDY TITLE: Cultural Factors in Managing an FMS Case Program:
Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps (SOCP) Program,

STUDY PROJECT GOALS: To identify, define, and evaluate critical cultural factors that have significant impact on management objectives in the US Army - SAAOC FMS case SOCP program.

STUDY REPORT ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate the impact of significant cultural differences, to include establishment of mutual program goals, attitudes towards time, economy and efficiency, planning, performance evaluation, the intrinsic value of work, and the role of language, as barriers to overall program success.

The report is based on personal experiences of an Ordnance Advisor and data generated from a structured interview/questionnaire of eight former Advisors who served with the SOCP program or related programs in Saudi Arabia. The report also examines the highly limited amount of management-oriented literature that presently is available concerning Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

The report concludes that cultural differences do have a significant impact which can be anticipated and prepared for by Program Management personnel; such differences cannot be avoided or ignored.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTORS:

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CULTURAL FACTORS IN MANAGING AN FMS CASE PROGRAM:
SAUDI ARABIAN ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS (SOCP) PROGRAM

Individual Study Program
Study Project Report
Prepared as a Formal Report

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Program Management Course
Class 77-2

by

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November 1977

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This study project report represents the views, conclusions and recommendations of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Defense Systems Management College or the Department of Defense.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural Factors in Managing an FMS Case Program: Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps (SOCP) Program

The study identifies and examines the role of significant cultural factors that impact on the overall success of a long-term FMS case between the US Army and the Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps. The study was encouraged by personal experiences as an Ordnance Program Division Advisor with the Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps in 1976-1977 which indicated that cultural differences play a significant role in SOCP program success and are almost certain to be equally significant in future related programs.

The study is organized in five parts: Introduction, The SOCP Program, Study Project Methodology, Analysis of Data, and Summary.

a. The study Introduction emphasizes the importance of FMS cases as a key portion of US political and economic strategy in the Middle East and places the SOCP program in this environment.

b. The SOCP Program describes background, evolution and current status of the program, emphasizing those organizational and managerial aspects that appear to be highly vulnerable to cultural differences.

c. Study Project Methodology describes the research effort and structured interview/questionnaire used to gather data from eight former Advisors who served with SOCP or related programs in Saudi Arabia.

d. Analysis of Data examines responses to the structured interview/questionnaire concerning the impact of cultural factors in establishing mutual program objectives, attitudes towards planning, use of

time, the intrinsic value of work, performance evaluation, economy and efficiency, and the role of language.

e. The Summary concludes that significant cultural factors do impact on the management and overall success of SOCP and similar FMS cases. Such factors cannot be ignored or avoided, but they can be anticipated and planned for in order to reduce negative impacts and program disruption. It appears that Program Management personnel are not presently being trained to do this.

Recommendations are provided for three areas of needed improvement that would assist Program Management Offices in anticipating and preparing for significant cultural differences that will impact on future FMS cases with Saudi Arabian customers.

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

General

Within the last few years the growing importance of Foreign Military Sales (FMS) has generated a new arena in which the Program Manager must be prepared to function. Under the terms of the Foreign Military Sales Act of 1968 (as revised/amended in 1976), financially independent countries of the free world are permitted to buy US equipment needed for their share of the common defense burden. FMS thus provides a valuable instrument of US foreign policy in assisting in the maintenance of world stability without direct US intervention (21:16). Underlying the general philosophy of FMS policy is a theme of mutual responsibilities and mutual interests - no longer is military assistance/aid considered a one-sided "give away" program. Because of such mutual responsibilities and interests, it is vitally important that US Army Program Management personnel understand the cultural background, requirements and desires of their FMS customers; without such understanding there is little chance of achieving mutual program success. This is especially true in dealing with politically and economically sensitive areas of the Middle East.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the cultural differences that can affect program success in a long-term FMS case with Saudi Arabia: the US Army - Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps

Program (SOCP). Although there is no simple, universally accepted definition of culture, for the purposes of this paper, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities, and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (24:40).

Cultural differences do exist, and they affect accomplishment of mutual program objectives in similar cases. By identifying, defining and evaluating critical cultural factors that have significant impact on SOCP management objectives, US Army FMS managers will, hopefully, be better able to anticipate and resolve potentially negative factors that can detract from program success if ignored or wished away.

By understanding the impact of such cultural factors, US Army Program Managers can better anticipate and plan for some "known unknowns" in an arena of increasing strategic, economic and political importance. Considering the extensive quantities of military equipment and weapons already sold to Saudi Arabia as part of our FMS program, it appears likely that the geographical area will remain a prime customer for additional major end items and follow-on logistics support for many years to come.

Scope

Some of the management features of SOCP are unique; however, many of the overall features of this program appear to have broader management implications. Perhaps the single most important management message of SOCP is that traditional western/US Army ways of doing business may not be totally applicable due to significant cultural

factors. The experiences of multi-national corporations doing business in the area tend to demonstrate some pitfalls that can arise from a "firm belief in the superiority of American management practices and technology" (19:63). Some of the observations/conclusions by one of America's foremost management authorities, Peter F. Drucker, have special relevance in determining the impact of cultural differences on the management of FMS programs. Drucker states that:

Management is an objective function determined by the tasks, that is, it is a discipline. And yet it is culturally conditioned and subject to the values, the traditions, the habits of a given society (6:18). (My emphasis added).

"It also becomes clear that we do not yet know how to transfer the knowledge of management, its discipline, its vision, and its values to new and different societies and cultures" (6:14).

In attempting to identify and analyze the impact of cultural factors on a specific FMS case, it is obvious that a "black box theory of management" is inadequate when crossing cultural lines. Attitudes towards efficiency and effectiveness, external constraints on internal management, and an extremely complex set of interrelationships dealing with sociological, political, legal, religious, linguistic, economic, educational traditions, customs and mores must be considered. In short, there are multi-dimensional demands that require a different set of expectations and perhaps different standards against which the long-term success of SOCP should/could be judged. One must always keep in mind that the success of such a program is a two-way street, a bilateral function that requires "recognizing the partner's attitudes and his visualization of the objective to be achieved . . . may well differ from one's own" (17:6).

SECTION II

THE SOCP PROGRAM

Background

The cultural environment of SOCP is inevitably linked with the physical environment of Saudi Arabia. The Arabian Peninsula contains some of the harshest, bleakest, desert and mountain terrain in the world. Although it has been settled by scattered nomadic tribes and in occasional isolated villages and cities for thousands of years, the national entity of Saudi Arabia only came into being during the first three decades of the 20th century when King Abdulaziz succeeded in uniting diverse tribal groups under his central, personal authority. Tribal loyalties, based on common origins and commonly shared fortunes and vicissitudes of desert life, were and still appear to remain ". . .habitually the closest and dearest tie of which they (Saudi Arabians) are conscious, far surpassing those of locality or nation" (10:228). Saudi Arabian society is characterized by cultural homogeneity based on the triple foundations of Islam, family and tradition (11:132). Today it is a society which is just beginning to change after centuries of isolation and stagnation. It is still to a great extent a society of feudal relationships, oriented to an idealized nomadic ideal, "the proud parochial freedom of the desert," and not receptive to the abstractions of Western thought (9:XIV).

The development of Saudi Arabia's immense oil wealth has opened up the area and culture to ever-increasing modernization and societal change. It is within this context of modernization and change that

the US Army - Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps Program (SOCP) is set.

The SOCP program was initiated in 1967 for the purpose of providing technical and managerial advice and assistance to the Saudi Ordnance Corps' efforts to create a modern combat service support structure, roughly paralleling the standard US Army support structure. This effort has included the purchase of extensive quantities of equipment and modern weapons systems. Due to limited availability of trained manpower, the essential effort of this program was based on contractor performance of supply, maintenance, and managerial services until Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps (SAAOC) personnel were prepared to assume those functions in a self-sufficient manner. The original program was expected to achieve self-sufficiency and phase-out over a seven year period. In 1974-1975, the SAAOC did in fact assume full managerial responsibility for the program's operations; for a variety of reasons it was decided that it would be better to continue contractor-provided supply and maintenance assistance and technical training for an additional period. This decision was based primarily on a greatly expanded modernization/mechanization program which included the purchase of large amounts of US-produced current generation self-propelled artillery, personnel carriers, tanks, mortar carriers, and sophisticated air defense and anti-tank missile systems. It now appears likely that the program will continue into the 1980's.

Present Situation

The present SOCP support contractor is Bendix-Siyanco Company, a joint venture of US-based Bendix International and the Saudi Arabian

Maintenance Company. Contract administration and monitoring is performed for the SAAOC by the Ordnance Program Division (OPD), US Army Engineer Division Middle East; this effort is part of several FMS cases between the US Army and the SAAOC. The Chief, OPD (a US Army Ordnance Colonel), exercises command/control over advisory efforts, as well as serving as Contracting Officer for the Bendix-Siyanco contract, currently worth approximately \$25 million dollars yearly. Appendix A shows the organization and mission of OPD. Appendix B depicts the geographical locations of OPD activities throughout the Kingdom.

The OPD Advisor at each site monitors contractor personnel performance, but he does not exercise any direct command/control authority over Bendix-Siyanco personnel or SAAOC personnel; nor does he possess Contracting Officer's Representative authority. For routine operations and planning, the OPD Advisor assists his SAAOC counterpart (LTC/COL) through advice, recommendations, and direct contact with contractor supervisors; for non-routine matters, the Advisor has a direct channel to the Chief, OPD, and Senior Advisors in Riyadh. He also serves as liaison with other advisory programs under the aegis of the US Military Training Mission (USMTM) and with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Advisors at HQ, SAAOC, perform similar functions and assist their counterparts in development of policy, planning, and overall administration of contractor support. They also deal extensively with other US agencies and activities in coordinating and implementing future FMS cases.

Their efforts, of necessity, thus involve a great deal of contact with other US personnel and allow a lesser degree of daily contact with

SAAOC counterparts than experienced by Advisors working alone at remote sites.

SECTION III

DATA COLLECTION

General

My personal experiences as Senior Ordnance Advisor at Khams Mushayt and from traveling extensively to all the OPD sites throughout the Kingdom in 1976-1977 indicated a number of cultural factors that appeared to impact directly on the overall success of SOCP and, potentially, were of broader interest to US Army Program Managers who might become involved in future FMS cases for Saudi Arabia. Management areas of special significance that appeared to be highly responsive to cultural differences included procedures for determining mutual objectives, attitudes towards planning, attitudes towards economy, efficiency, and the intrinsic rewards of work, attitudes about time, performance evaluation, styles of management, and the effect of language itself. I also became interested in determining if there were key factors or characteristics that might be effectively used in selecting advisors and predicting how successful they might be.

As part of the research for this paper, I conducted a search of available management literature dealing with the cultural aspects of management, especially in the Middle East and in Saudi Arabia in particular. In view of the strategic, political and economic interests shown by both US government and US businessmen in the geographical area, there is an amazing dearth of periodical literature emphasizing the myriad cultural aspects of doing business in Saudi Arabia; scholarly studies are equally lacking.

Having identified selected cultural areas of special emphasis, I prepared a structured questionnaire which was then used in interviewing six Army Ordnance Corps officers who had served with SOCP in recent years; I also interviewed two former USMTM advisors (one an Ordnance officer, one a Quartermaster officer) who had served in Saudi Arabia and had worked extensively with SOCP in development of FMS cases supporting the Saudi Arabian Army's mechanization/modernization program now well underway. I informally obtained comments from Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN) Officer Assignment Managers responsible for manning both programs. The structured interview format appears in Appendix C.

Sample Population

The sample population of eight officers (seven Ordnance Corps, one Quartermaster Corps) had an average grade of Major; average years of military service of 14+ years; average age of 37+ years; average civilian education level of Master's Degree; average military education equivalent of staff college. The average amount of time spent in Saudi Arabia was 1.25 years. All respondents had served tours in Saudi Arabia during the 1970-1977 interval; their duties included basic advisory duties at BMD level and staff positions at HQ, SAAOC and USMTM.

The two respondents who had served with USMTM were included to determine if participants in a separate but somewhat parallel program differed significantly in their perception of typical problems/factors experienced by SOCP advisors. Their responses did not differ

significantly, to include those questions concerning the impact of language. It had been anticipated that USMTM personnel who had attended Arabic language training would perceive language to be less a barrier; this was not the case and might be due to a heightened awareness of the nuances of the language.

SECTION IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Question 1: To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the definition of a "successful" program?

Three of eight responses indicated disagreement; one of eight indicated uncertainty; and four of eight indicated agreement.

This range of responses seems to reflect the ambivalence or uncertainty that surrounds defining and establishing mutual goals in a cross-cultural setting. A basic thread running through the collective experience of the sample group concerned defining the standards against which "success" could/should be measured. A general consensus seemed to be that the program was a "success" as long as the SAAOC customer was satisfied - and, in fact, the customer, having started from a recent baseline of non-mechanization, sees progress and improvement everywhere. Hence, there is generally agreement that SOCP is successful. Perhaps this achievement is less than satisfactory in the subjective view of US Army observers who insist on comparing results against current Army operational readiness standards for US troop units.

An additional observation reflects the relative position of the counterpart in the SAAOC hierarchy: the higher the level, the more likely the counterpart is to reflect a Western orientation and outlook. This is probably due in part to more senior SAAOC officers having been educated in the US and often having traveled extensively outside the Kingdom. It may also reflect the expectations that senior US Army personnel tend to have for their counterpart.

Question 2: To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree that language was a barrier to mutual program accomplishment?

One of eight responses indicated uncertainty; five of eight reflected agreement; two of eight reflected strong agreement.

Agreement/strong agreement was indicated from advisors at all levels of organization. Both OPD personnel who received no language training and USMTM advisors who attended either an eight week introductory course or the full 47 week Arabic course at the Defense Language Institute agreed that language was a major barrier; their counterparts, to include those who spoke English fluently, agreed that program success was significantly and negatively impacted by the Arabic - English language barrier.

Experiences reported by multi-national corporations doing business in the area tend to reflect these findings. A general consensus seems to be that, "Language is not enough - it is a first step." Being able to interpret Arabic - English is merely a starting point, what is truly required is "a cultural translator, a person who translates not only between languages but also between different ways of thinking, between different cultures" (3:84).

Linguistic studies emphasize the critical role of Arabic as a language. "Arabic is the factor that defines and determines membership in the national aggregate. In the Arabic world, the question, 'Who is an Arab?' is usually answered, 'One whose mother tongue is Arabic.'" (12:43). Linguistic identity thus transcends geography and even makes "Arabs" of members of different religions (Sunni Moslems and Shii Moslems)(12:40).

Arabic is famous for its verbal eloquence; it lends itself to

rhetoricism, exaggeration, over-assertion, and repetition (12:49). Advisors experiencing these phenomena for the first time and accepting them on face value as fact tended to feel that they had been misled and deceived. Any such conclusion failed to consider that complex exhortations and seemingly total acceptance are often merely linguistic devices:

. . . a simple assent from an Arab can be, for him, nothing more than a polite form of evasion, while the same word may mean for his English interlocutor a definite, positive commitment. A simple "yes" or "no" is, for the English speaker, a definitive statement. His Arabic interlocutor, however, conditioned as he is by the exaggeration and over assertion that are the rule in his mother tongue, is simply incapable of understanding such brief and simple statements in the same sense (12:56).

Other examples of the linguistic barrier are derived from the structure of the language itself. For example, verb tenses do not correspond with those of Indo-European languages, thus the imperfect form can stand for present, future and past tense! (12:68).

For people speaking a language in which the verb has these semantic features, time cannot have the same definite, ordered, and sequential connotation that it has for people speaking a strictly time-structured language (12:68).

Other language problems are concerned with the difficulty or total inability to translate complex technical terms and concepts into meaningful Arabic - there simply is no Arabic equivalent. This creates special problems for SOCF personnel who deal primarily with technical aspects of supply and maintenance for highly sophisticated weapons systems. This problem is further exacerbated by a general absence of any technical orientation and background for most SAAOC personnel. These men have not grown up in a society oriented towards machinery, and they do not always intuitively accept a cause - effect relationship for things mechanical.

A particular caution was often expressed when attempting to discuss

complex, sophisticated technical material with senior counterparts who possessed relative fluency in English; often one could not be certain that the communication was actually occurring, even though both parties were enunciating the same words and seemed to be in agreement. Personal status and an almost-Asian concept of "face" often precluded questioning, clarification, and true understanding.

Question 3: In view of the long term goals of the SOCP program, to what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the value of detailed program planning?

Short-range: One of eight responses indicated uncertainty; six of eight indicated agreement; and one of eight indicated strong agreement.

Mid-range: One of eight indicated strong disagreement; four of eight indicated disagreement; two of eight indicated agreement; and one of eight indicated strong agreement.

Long-range: Three of eight strongly disagreed; three of eight disagreed; one of eight agreed; and one of eight strongly agreed.

The management area of planning appeared to be one of the most frustrating for advisory personnel who viewed long-range results as being the true pay-off for the program. Counterpart personnel tended to accept the requirement for short-range planning; mid- and long-range planning requirements were not generally accepted and were often rejected totally. Individual responses indicating agreement/strong agreement were caveated by comments that while counterparts agreed on the theoretical necessity for planning, they often paid only lip service to actually doing it or of following any plans that were formulated. This seemed to be especially true of senior counterparts who were Western-oriented and aware of all the staff officer's bag

of tricks.

Counterpart aversion to planning appears to be deeply rooted in both their concept of time and in religious beliefs. As discussed in Question 2, "Arabic has verb tenses which are semantically vague and indeterminant. This feature should endow Arab culture with a vague and indeterminant perception of time" (12:69). Because time has little meaning of itself, there is an acceptance of an Asian-like cyclical theory of time: everything runs in cycles, returning at a later date to its original point. If this is so, there is little point in deliberately planning and implementing change - the traditional theory of the status quo (24:450).

Religion also appears to play a central role.

The normative function of religion is manifested in the extent to which it regulates everyday behavior through positive and negative commandments, all of which, ideally, must be observed. In the West . . . religion has become divorced from essentially secular goals and values which constitute the bulk of modern Western culture. In the Arab world, Islam permeates life - it is not one aspect of life, but the hub from which all else radiates. Religion was and . . . has remained the central normative force in life (12:144).

For the devout Moslem, everything is predestined or determined by Allah.

For the tradition-bound Arab mind, there is something sinful in engaging in long-range planning because it seems to imply that one does not put one's trust in divine providence (12:150).

Another facet of planning that differs drastically from the normative sequential, incremental methodology in which advisors have been trained is that:

Arabs approach any undertaking in successive and isolated spasms, rather than in a continuous and sustained effort and endeavor. For the Arab, "it is much easier, it would seem, to plunge into immediate action, envisaged as a 'one-shot' action,

than it is to embark upon a protracted action which it is recognized in advance would necessitate continuous implementation and patient sacrifice over a long period" (12:82).

This proclivity for short-range, immediate action was often observed to cause suboptimizations that could have easily been averted by adherence to the simplest of plans. One of the most difficult aspects for an OPD Advisor to empathize with after observing periods of frenetic crisis activity was a following period of equally inexplicable calm, based on Kismet, or fate. Acceptance of Kismet gives calm and equanimity in the face of adversity.

It especially discourages long-range efforts which require advance planning, because any such activity comes dangerously close to rebelling against Allah and His will as manifested in the existing order of things. This deterministic orientation inclines the Arab to abdicate responsibility for improving his lot or providing for his future (12:153).

It also leads to a highly polarized view of life and strongly ambivalent feelings towards the West and its alien technology. This seeming inability to accept and master the language of technology creates a mental climate not favorable to industrialization and mechanization (12:276). There is a prevalent feeling that all the answers are already possessed: the products and technology of the West are at the same time desired and scorned. Overcoming this aspect of Saudi culture will be a slow and arduous process - but it is essential if the full potential of SOCP and related programs is to be realized.

Question 4: To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the perception/use of time as a significant management parameter?

Two of eight responses indicated agreement; six of eight indicated disagreement.

As might be expected from earlier responses, advisory personnel felt that their perception/use of time differed significantly from that of the SAMOC counterpart. The typical US attitude towards time is futuristic and addresses time as a commodity having intrinsic value: time is money, and like other factors of production, must be treated as a scarce resource (7:22). Such a perception quickly comes into conflict with the "... general disinclination or inability of the Arabs to concern themselves with precisely defined timing" (12:65).

This attitude is probably best summarized by one of the first Arabic phrases encountered when discussing any event: "Bukrah, in Shallah" - tomorrow, Allah-willing. Any future action, no matter how minor, is always discussed in terms of tomorrow or the next day. The message is soon firmly imprinted: it really doesn't matter whether most events occur today, tomorrow, the day after, or not at all. Things will sort themselves out when the time comes.

Needless to say, such an attitude wreaks havoc in production schedules established for maintenance shop operations or for supply operations tied to clearly defined, time-phased priorities. Attitudes towards time create problems in scheduling, in work hours, in transportation:

... The concept of punctuality does not exist in traditional Arab culture, ... and the introduction of rigorous time schedules demanded by modernization, has encountered great difficulties (12:66).

On numerous occasions, advisors experienced difficulty in traveling throughout the Kingdom via Saudi Airlines (the only internally operating public air carrier). One never knew if or when a scheduled flight would depart; the only alternative was to go to the airport

early and wait - a flight might arrive early or late or not at all. A prudent advisor soon learned to avoid this time trap by allowing a day or two as a buffer when he absolutely had to be somewhere on time. Businessmen, as well as military advisors, make adjustments for the "Desert Factor" and double the time normally estimated for any step in project planning and negotiations on home ground (18:33).

Another aspect of the time issue lies in the social realm. It is considered to be bad manners to hurry, especially if this appears to ignore or by-pass time-consuming traditional Saudi amenities in which people devote as much time to the formalities of business relations as they do to the business itself (19:63). One cannot ignore drinking tea and making small talk as a prelude to any important discussion; it is part of traditional Saudi courtesy and hospitality and sets the stage for meaningful discussion. An advisor who considers it to be a waste of time and who insists on plunging immediately into the business at hand will, at best, be considered rude, ignorant, and impatient. He will also be ineffective, until he accepts this as a cultural "given" and makes realistic allowance for it in his planning and use of time.

Question 5: To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the necessity for some measure of individual performance evaluation?

One of eight indicated strong disagreement; two of eight disagreed; one of eight expressed uncertainty; three of eight agreed; and one of eight strongly agreed.

This question generated the widest range of responses to the

questionnaire and probably reflects some of the most strongly held cultural attitudes and perceptions.

Advisory personnel have instilled in them an institutional insistence that an individual be given responsibilities and that he should be held accountable for his actions. Advisors are also culturally oriented towards individual initiative and success:

. . . It has been widely accepted that the typical Western needs to compete, strive, and achieve, and consequently to perceive oneself as a success can be traced, at least in part, to the influence of the Protestant ethic (25:487).

The SAAOC counterpart views work from a dramatically different cultural point of view; to him, "Work is a curse. It represents the diametrical opposite of the Protestant ethic, which considers work as a good, something that ennobles man" (12:114). Given these opposing views of work, there is little wonder that advisors and counterparts differ on whether one should have his performance evaluated against some objective standard, especially when that performance is judged on an individual basis. Tribal and feudal relations, which still lie very close to the surface of Saudi life, have placed a premium on activities beneficial to the group. "Individual initiative is only encouraged when it serves and enhances the interest of the group" (11:166). Saudi society is also strongly influenced by the Islamic concept that all men are brothers and equal before Allah and all are predestined to their fate. Hence it is somewhat inappropriate to single out an individual for reward or punishment on something as mundane as work.

This attitude is further buttressed by a lack of organizational

loyalty: loyalties are personal in nature and are not directed towards achievement of organizational objectives. Thus performance evaluation techniques along western lines, if used at all, evaluate and document personal relationships and ties and do not necessarily reflect actual performance. Such attitudes carry over into evaluation of Bendix - Siyanco contractor personnel; SAAOC supervisors were often reluctant to render reasonably accurate performance reports out of fear that the report would prevent an individual's advancement or, in extreme cases, would result in termination for cause. This has created interesting anomalies in which the contractor has been prevented from effectively managing and disciplining his own employees. This situation becomes even more sensitive when the employee happens to be a third-country national or a Saudi who shares the strongest common bond of Islamic faith.

It has also created situations in which OPD Advisors have fallen into disfavor and have been rendered ineffective, due to their insistence on objective evaluation of contractor performance against US performance standards. From a contractual point of view, it becomes difficult to incentivize a contractor on performance, when he correctly believes that his true "success" lies for the most part in the personal relationships and rapport he enjoys with the SAAOC customer and not necessarily his **actual**, measurable job performance.

Question 6: To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the meaning and desirability of "economy and efficiency" in program operations?

One of eight responses indicated strong disagreement; four of

eight indicated disagreement; and three of eight indicated agreement.

Of the three who indicated agreement, all caveated with the clarification that their counterpart (all at higher level HQ) agreed in a theoretical vein and paid at least lip service to the concept.

The underlying theme of this question addresses some of the basic precepts of management in the US Army. OPD Advisors are oriented towards the goals of economy and efficiency - doing the right things, in the right manner, at the right time, and at the right/reasonable cost. Although counterparts were encouraged to "budget" and justify program expenditures, it appeared that "economy and efficiency" were relatively meaningless terms: there was always more than enough money for all aspects of the program. Many questionable practices, especially in supply operations, were followed although they were demonstrably not cost-effective and made little contribution to operational readiness. Supply discipline was non-existent, because there was no pressing economic reason to make it of value. In such an environment, individual advisors often felt frustrated, because the very essence of what they were supposed to do - advise in supply and maintenance management - had no true meaning to the customer and thus became a theoretical exercise against conspicuous waste. Contractor personnel observing all of this had little incentive to teach standard US supply and maintenance doctrine which seemed to have little relevance or application to the expressed desires and practice of the customer.

Question 7: To what degree did you and your monitoring headquarters agree on the impact of cultural differences in administering the program?

Five of eight responses indicated disagreement; one of eight

indicated uncertainty; two of eight indicated agreement.

The general consensus on this question reflected a feeling that while the program failed/succeeded at the grass-roots level, the higher you went in the advisory hierarchy, the less likely you were to perceive the real impact of cultural factors. One response surmised that this was true due to higher levels tending to force their counterparts into a Westernized, US mold. It also may reflect that at higher level HQ's, US Army personnel tended to work more with other US personnel and with contractor top management than directly with senior SAAOC counterparts; at the BMD Advisor level, a single OPD Advisor often was the only program representative at that location - he worked only with his counterpart and contractor personnel and could not readily avoid cultural aspects of the program. Geographical location also played a role: Riyadh, Jeddah, and to a lesser extent the summer capital Taif had many features and accoutrements of modern, Western-style life support; other locations were just beginning to feel the impact of modernization.

Another possible explanation is that at higher HQ, Saudi counterparts tended to be better educated and to have had more exposure to Western style life and especially US Army military philosophy. Thus, there were fewer perceived cultural differences.

Perhaps the only conclusion that can be drawn is that perceptions of cultural differences are a function of exposure: the more you interact, the more aware you tend to be of differences. It also suggests that the less aware you are of real cultural differences, the more you tend to evaluate program accomplishments against a single,

US-type standard. Higher level HQ often tended to expect their subordinates to exert more influence than was ever achievable due to those cultural differences.

Question 3: How did you characterize your counterpart's management style in terms of a Democratic-Laissez Faire-Authoritarian continuum? To what extent could you compare that style with "typical" US/Western management approaches/styles?

One of eight responses ranked the counterpart as Authoritarian; seven of eight responses ranked their counterpart as Laissez-Faire. All responses indicated that these management style descriptors were comparable with current US usage, suggesting that there may, in fact, be some management universals.

Responses reflect the rather egalitarian nature of Saudi society which accepts the brotherhood of all men. This carries over into military organizations where rank often appeared to have far less meaning than it does in the US Army. Individual advisors reported witnessing scenes in which privates did not hesitate to "tell off" an SAAOC colonel, especially if they were members of the same tribe. Generally, counterparts tended not to get involved in routine operations; when they were forced by circumstances to intervene, they tended to exert totally authoritarian control. There did not appear to be any attempt at democratic consensus-making. No matter how immature subordinates appeared to be, SAAOC counterparts normally dealt with them in relation-oriented terms rather than imposing a more structured task-oriented behavior. There was little evidence of a more sophisticated tailoring of responses to situational requirements. Middle managers were reluctant to make decisions and were not trained/expected

to do so. Thus fairly minor problems eventually reached high levels in the organization before a decision could be rendered. However, this was no guarantee that subordinates would, in fact, comply with that decision! Unless an issue was truly critical, no authoritarian disciplinary measures appeared to be enforced. Hard decisions tended to be put off until overcome by events.

Question 9: How did you prepare for your assignment in Saudi Arabia? To what extent did you feel your preparation was beneficial/successful?

Six of eight responses (all OPD Advisors) indicated no advance special preparation. Two of eight responses (USMTM) reported attending Arabic language courses and specialized military assistance/international logistics instruction in preparation.

The two USMTM Advisors felt that their preparation was essential: without it they would have been ineffective. The OPD Advisors reported varying degrees of perceived effectiveness, but all indicated that they felt that special language training/introduction to culture and background would have greatly eased their transitional period. They also lamented the lack of readily available information on Arabia.

(In order to determine the availability of information to an individual locally, I canvassed routine sources of information at Fort Belvoir: only the Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia, DA Pamphlet 550-51, and a handful of other documents were readily available. Additional resource material had to be borrowed through other library facilities, taking two to three weeks in the process).

Question 10: If you could give one single bit of advice to an advisor selectee prior to his departure from CONUS, what advice would you offer?

Generally, all eight responses focused on the following:

1. Attend either the eight week introductory or 47 week full Arabic course at Defense Language Institute.
2. Read all the material you can get your hands on.
3. Most importantly, talk to people who have served in the Kingdom.
4. Try to accept the culture with an open mind: don't try to judge by US standards until you have some feeling for what is reasonably achievable - remember that the customer is running and paying for his own show.

Respondents were unanimous in indicating that a certain amount of culture shock was inevitable, but indicated that lack of preparation was a major source of initial frustration. There was a general feeling that rapid personnel turnover (every one or two years) contributed to a loss of institutional/organizational memory, especially for non-quantifiable cultural aspects of the program.

One phenomenon that I and a majority of respondents personally experienced should also be anticipated as a part of culture shock. We all arrived with unreasonably high expectations; these expectations and related goals were immediately challenged by co-workers who cautioned new arrivals not to expect too much. About two to three months after arrival, advisors tended to experience a tremendous drop in expectations and a resulting frustration and bitterness concerning the possibility of accomplishing anything, no matter how slight.

In time, individuals tended to arrive at some internally acceptable reduced level of expectations, oriented towards simpler goals and standards more commensurate with organizational reality. A few advisors appeared unable or unwilling to make this adjustment and grew increasingly alienated from their counterparts and other SOCP personnel who opted for lessened, achievable goals in place of goals appropriate to a US Army troop unit.

Question 11: How were you selected for your Saudi Arabian assignment? As far as you can determine, did you have identifiable special skills that influenced your being selected? If so, what were those special skills?

Six of eight responses indicated they were selected routinely due to being due for a short tour in their career specialty areas (supply/maintenance). Two of eight responses indicated they were nominated for the assignment by associates serving in Saudi Arabia and that, being due for a short tour, they were selected.

Informal contact with Officer Assignments Personnel, US Army Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN) indicate that advisors for Saudi Arabia programs are selected considering:

1. routine requirements for unaccompanied and/or short tours;
 2. career speciality experience;
 3. generally competitive status with contemporaries;
 4. no record of personality/character traits that might interfere with satisfactory performance in a conservative Moslem country.
- In theory, any officer who has performed satisfactorily is considered eligible to be an advisor. Special requirements that can be justified and documented by the requiring commands are considered as another

management parameter.

Only one of eight responses indicated possession of an identifiable special skill (legal background and contract administrative experience); this skill did not appear to over-ride routine assignment requirements, as it was not formally stated as a mandatory skill for the position.

Language training requirements have not been specified as pre-requisites for OPD selectees in the past.

Question 12: Do you feel there should be special pre-requisites for selecting personnel for such an assignment? If no, what are those pre-requisites?

Eight of eight responses indicated that there should be special emphasis placed on selecting personnel who, in the ultimate sense, represent the US Army and US Government in a critical area of the world. A basic requirement was assumed to be technical competence in supply and maintenance operations/management or the more specialized skills required at OPD HQ. All indicated that a broad management background was helpful; three of eight responses indicated that advance degrees in any field gave extra credibility to an advisors advice and imparted an "expert" aura to the advisor's qualifications in the eyes of his SAAOC counterpart. There was a general consensus that attendance at Command and General Staff College or a comparable school was also very favorably viewed by counterparts who tend to view their own attendance at a staff college as entry into an elite group.

There was also a consensus that non-quantifiable personality and character traits play a critical role in determining whether an individual advisor will be relatively effective; the present Officer

Efficiency Report (OER) system probably cannot differentiate satisfactorily enough to select people based solely on these factors, and the factors which are evaluated are not necessarily predictive. One of the more senior respondents commented that there appeared to be a negative link between advisor effectiveness and previously recognized super performance: individuals previously identified/recognized as being on a super fast track (below the zone promotions) appeared to have a hard time accepting cultural factors that responded negatively to overwhelming ambition and a desire personally to move things at an ever-increasingly fast pace.

The most effective/successful advisors were considered to be individuals who adapted their pace to that of the SAAOC counterpart and the local culture. They attempted to work within the Saudi system without making strong value judgments about the worth of that system, keeping in mind that it was what the Saudi customer wanted and what worked for that customer who, in the long run, also paid the bills.

It was also suggested that prior successful performance as an advisor, preferably in the Middle East, was probably a general predictor of success as an advisor in Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, there do not appear to be adequate numbers of such experienced personnel available for additional tours on an equitable personnel management basis.

The experiences of multi-national corporations in selecting management personnel for key overseas positions may have some relevance in selecting military advisors. Corporate personnel managers have found that it is essential for international managers to:

. . . acquire a thorough understanding of the differences in cultural background, outlook, reaction, and attitudes as well as a thorough understanding of the best ways to motivate people of different nationalities and help them to work well together with a minimum of conflict (3:217).

They point out that a style of leadership that has been effective in one country may not work at all in another, due to cultural differences (13:137). The transfer of management expertise between cultures has proved particularly difficult, as well as the organization and transfer of technology and production techniques (12:276).

In the absence of detailed studies indicating any better way of selecting overseas managers, some personnel managers believe that, "proven adaptability to new situations is a quality of paramount importance in assigning a candidate overseas" (19:62). They also rank physical and emotional health as a key requirement. At best, selection is a judgmental art; unfortunately,

"It is common for those in management to make decisions about the suitability of corporate candidates for overseas assignments never to have visited the port in question themselves, or even the country where it is located." This is especially true for countries of the Middle East, to include Saudi Arabia (19:62).

DODD 5132.3 Department of Defense Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Assistance specifies that "The selection and training of US personnel engaged in security assistance activities will receive special attention." This policy would seem to require that procedures for selecting and training advisory personnel, especially those concerned with implementation of major FFS cases, should be anything but routine. Based on the sample data and informal contacts with MILPERGEN, there does not appear to be any special emphasis

currently being placed on screening, selecting, and training potential OPD Advisors and other FMS managers, nor does there appear to be any predictive performance data that could routinely be used for such a selection process. Existing courses in security assistance and international logistics such as the Defense Security Assistance Management Core (three week) Course and the Defense Security Assistance Management-Overseas (eight day) Course conducted by the Air Force Institute of Technology appear to be oriented primarily to government policies and procedures with emphasis on the policy level rather than on critical cultural factors. It does not appear that any courses other than the Arabic language courses at Defense Language Institute attempt to provide preparation for the cultural factors that challenge management of SOCF and other Saudi Arabian programs.

SECTION V

SUMMARY

Conclusions

The basic conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of the interview/questionnaire data and background discussions is that cultural differences exert significant impacts on SOCP; these impacts vary in range, scope, and importance depending on where you are in the SOCP advisory and SAAOC counterpart hierarchies. They cannot be ignored with impunity; they cannot be avoided; they can to a great extent be anticipated as critical management factors. By anticipating and preparing for those cultural "known-unknowns," there is less chance of such factors negating program success or causing an advisor to become alienated and frustrated to the detriment of his career and the long-term mutual interests of the Saudi Arabian Army Ordnance Corps, the US Army, and the US Government.

Recommendations

Based on these general conclusions, I feel it is appropriate to recommend the following actions be considered:

1. Develop a systematic method of selecting, training, and evaluating advisor personnel. There must be a more selective approach than simply taking an officer, who is generally competitive with his peers and due for a routine short or unaccompanied tour, and placing him into a highly demanding, sensitive position without first screening

and preparing that individual for the cultural aspects of management. The responsibility for establishing such a method should be given to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) in order to achieve standardization and unity of effort across service lines.

2. Ensure that Program Management Offices that are about to enter the FMS arena with an SAAOC customer conduct detailed advanced planning and preparation for the cultural differences that can significantly impact their programs. You cannot satisfy your FMS customer without first having some appreciation for his cultural antecedents. You cannot assume that standard US Army management practices will routinely be accepted by that customer. In particular, the customer's attitudes towards time, economy and efficiency, and the difficulties associated with mid- and long-range planning can wreak havoc with a critical program schedule that is dependent upon timely definitization of customer requirements, quantities, costs, and follow-on logistics support. If the Program Management Office must deploy personnel to accompany hardware as part of Quality Assurance and training requirements, orientation and preparation regarding cultural factors is mandatory. This should be a service responsibility of the Material Developer; in the case of the US Army, this should be accomplished by DARCOM.

3. Develop a readily available package of reference materials on cultural aspects of FMS management. Presently, there is a lack of such material; just identifying potential sources of data is a real challenge and quite time-consuming. A follow-on effort at DSAC should

systematically identify and assemble a reference set of management literature oriented to the requirements of a Program Management Office about to become involved with FMS requirements.

APPENDIX A

Ordnance Program Division (OPD) Organization/Mission

Headquarters, Riyadh:

<u>Position:</u>	<u>Function:</u>
Chief, OPD (COL)	Advisor to Chief, SAAOC; Contracting Officer for BxS contract; Command/control SOCI advisory effort.
Deputy/XO (LTC)	Assist/support Chief, OPD.
Senior Operations/Training/ Personnel Advisor (LTC)	Advisor to Director, Opns-Trng, SAAOC and to Director, Personnel, SAAOC.
Senior Supply Advisor (LTC)	Advisor to Director, Central Inven- tory Control Point (CICP).
ADP Advisor (MAJ)	Advisor to Chief, ADP Branch (CICP).
Senior Maintenance Advisor (LTC)	Advisor to Director, Central Maintenance Point (CMP).
Senior Facilities Support Advisor (GS-17)	Advisor to Director, Facilities Support.
Chief, Contracts Adminis- tration Service (GS-12)	Functional administration BxS con- tract; limited comptroller support through USAED Middle East for accounting/funding services.

In-Kingdom Sites:

Al Kharj Depot:

Senior Depot Advisor (MAJ/LTC)	Advisor to Commander, Al Kharj Ord- nance Depot (only supply and main- tenance depot in Kingdom).
Technical Advisor-Supply (WO)	Ditto.
Technical Advisor-Maintenance (WO)	Ditto.

Jedde Base Maintenance
Directorate:

Senior Ordnance Advisor (CPT) Advisor to BMD for Direct Support supply/maintenance operations and in-bound ordnance port operations.

Tabuk Base Maintenance
Directorate:

Senior Ordnance Advisor (MAJ) Advisor to BMD for Direct Support/General Support supply/maintenance operations and to Commander, Northern Area Command.

Rhamis Mughayt Base
Maintenance Directorate.

Senior Ordnance Advisor (MAJ) Advisor to BMD for Direct Support/General Support supply/maintenance operations and to Commander, Southern Area Command.

Taif Area:

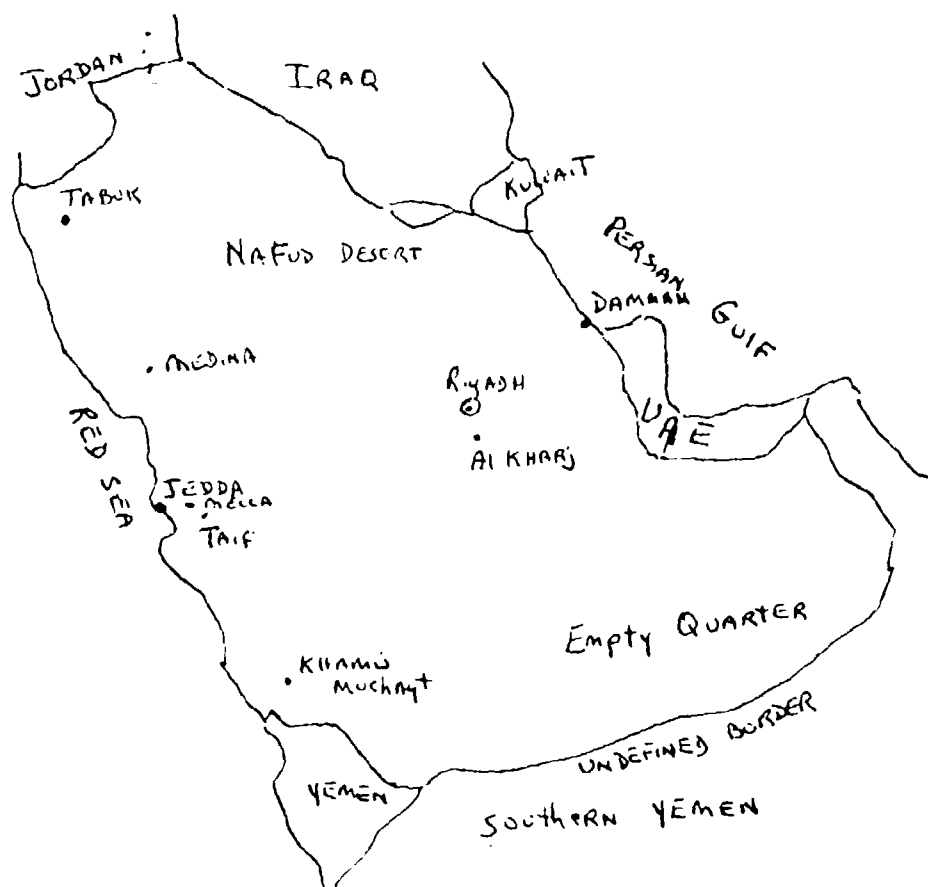
Senior Advisor, The Ordnance Corps School (MAJ) Advisor to Commandant, TOCS (only Ordnance school in Kingdom).

Technical Advisor-Supply (SGM/WO) Ditto.

Senior Ordnance Advisor, Taif Base Maintenance Directorate (MAJ) Advisor to BMD for Direct Support/General Support supply/maintenance operations.

APPENDIX B CPD LOCATIONS

SAUDI ARABIA



0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 KM

APPENDIX C

Structured Interview/Questionnaire

1. To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the definition of a "successful" program?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

2. To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree that language was a barrier to mutual program accomplishment?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed it Was a Barrier	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed it Was a Barrier

3. In view of the long-term goals of the SOCP program, to what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the value of detailed program planning . . .

in the short-range?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

in the mid-range?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

in the long-range?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

4. To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the perception/use of time as a significant management parameter?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

5. To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the necessity for some measure of individual performance evaluation?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

6. To what degree did you and your counterpart(s) agree on the meaning and desirability of "economy and efficiency" in program operations?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

7. To what degree did you and your monitoring headquarters agree on the impact of cultural differences in administering the SOCP program?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	Strongly Agreed

The following questions are open-ended and subjective:

8. How did you characterize your counterpart's management style in terms of Democratic-Authoritarian-Laissez Faire?

To what extent could you compare that style with "typical" US/Western management approaches/styles?

9. How did you prepare for your assignment in Saudi Arabia?

To what extent did you feel your preparation was beneficial/successful?

10. If you could give one single bit of advice to an advisor selectee prior to his departure from CONUS, what advice would you offer?

11. How were you selected for your Saudi Arabian assignment?

Question 11-continued:

As far as you can determine, did you have identifiable special skills that influenced your being selected? If so, what were those special skills?

12. Do you feel there should be special prerequisites for selecting personnel for such an assignment? If so, what are those prerequisites?

Biographical Background

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age:
☐ Under 20 ☐ 40-49
☐ 20-29 ☐ 50-59
☐ 30-39 ☐ 60 or over
3. Education:
☐ High School Degree
☐ Some College or Technical School
☐ College Degree
☐ Some Graduate Work
☐ Master's Degree or Higher
4. Military Grade:
☐ HCO ☐ MAJ
☐ WO ☐ LTC
☐ LT ☐ COL
☐ CPT
5. Number of Years Military Experience:
☐ Under 8
☐ 8-14

☐ 15-20

☐ 21-29

☐ 30 or more

6. Military Education:

☐ Enlisted MOS-Producing Schools

☐ Basic Officer

☐ Advanced Officer

☐ Staff College

☐ Senior Service School

☐ Arabic Language School

☐ Other

7. What was your brief job title:

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